

SAFER STOPS FOR VULNERABLE CUSTOMERS

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The safety and security of public bus stops are critical considerations for patrons, potential users, transit agencies, and the communities they serve. As transit agencies continue to seek innovative and effective means of increasing ridership and improving the image of public transportation, the bus stop must be acknowledged as part of the overall transit environment. Factors such as the location, design, maintenance, and general appearance of bus stops greatly affect the public's perception, and often the reality of a stop's safety and security.

Some transit customers are generally considered to be more vulnerable in terms of their safety and security at bus stops. Women, children, senior citizens, and the disabled often have additional or different needs and preferences than the population at large. Because these groups constitute a large portion of transit ridership, it is important to address their concerns and explore available options in mitigating the problems associated with the safety and security of these vulnerable populations.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of this project is to provide a synopsis, based on Internet resources and transit agency personnel, of the current literature and of the technologies being used in the development of safer and more secure bus stops. While the focus is chiefly on vulnerable populations (women, children, senior citizens, and the disabled), the study also addresses improvements related to the safety and security of bus stops as an issue relevant to all transit users, as well as to potential users, the community at large, and the transit industry in general.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Transit customers have less confident feelings related to their safety and security at bus stops than they do while on the transit vehicle. Understanding the needs and perceptions of transit customers is particularly important in creating safer and more secure environments for those populations that may be more vulnerable in terms of their concerns or of their actual safety and security. This synthesis of the literature found several recurrent passenger concerns related to safety and security at bus stops, which include the following:

- shelters
- benches
- lighting
- location
- the surrounding environment
- design
- maintenance and cleanliness of the stop

- the number and type of people waiting or passing by the stop
- wait times
- access to and from the stop
- monitoring of the stop

Various improvement strategies and technological innovations have been developed to address these issues and enhance the safety and security of bus stops for vulnerable customers as well as all transit passengers. The following are those enhancements or recommendations most often cited as having potential in creating safer and more secure bus stops:

- increased or improved lighting in darker areas
- analysis of bus stop crime data
- collaborate monitoring efforts with police
- installation of pay telephones restricted to outbound calls or emergency-use telephones;
- adequate signage
- video surveillance
- more frequent service to reduce wait times
- relocate stops away from high crime areas or negative land uses
- clear shelters with unobstructed views in and out
- place benches and shelters an adequate distance away from vehicular traffic on non-slip, properly drained concrete
- locate stops near pedestrian crosswalks and curb ramps
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
- locate stops near existing land uses
- shelter materials should be resistant to the elements and vandalism
- adherence to ADA guidelines regarding wheelchair accessibility
- periodic evaluation of stops

The bus stop is part of the overall transit environment and is perceived as such by the public. Safety and security must be considered from a holistic perspective, accounting for the environmental attributes of the area, if the most vulnerable passengers are to feel comfortable while using transit. A better understanding of customer preferences, the contributing factors of design, and awareness of available technologies will aid in the creation of safe and secure transit environments for all transit customers.

A collaborative approach to the improvement of bus stop safety and security may hold great potential for creating a more positive transit environment. Community involvement is increasingly recognized as a critical component of public planning, and it is now standard practice in transit planning. The vulnerable populations discussed in this document are frequent customers for transit agencies, and collaboration with representatives from these groups is imperative to meeting the needs of these important customers. Without input from stakeholders within the service community, public transportation cannot be considered truly *public*. In addition to those populations using and/or paying for their local transit service, other entities such as the police, environmental groups, advertisers, safety advocates, and planners all have something to contribute to the process of transportation planning. Collaboration among the various parties greatly contributes to the creation of a positive transit environment.

BENEFITS

This research gathers into one convenient location the findings and conclusions of earlier studies that addressed the subject matter from a similar or related perspective. It documents the most successful strategies and, thus, will provide practitioners with information regarding which strategy to employ locally.

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